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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 000067

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PK

SUBJECT: AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY VOTES
OUT PRIME MINISTER

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

¶11. (SBU) Summary: While the rest of the world focused on the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks, there was a quiet change of government in the semi-independent area of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir--known as Azad (free) Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). On January 6, the AJK Legislative Assembly approved a no-confidence motion against Muslim Conference (MC) leader and AJK Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan. Thirty-one of the 46 members present in the assembly approved the no-confidence vote and chose to replace him with rising MC leader, Sardar Mohammad Yaqoob Khan. Commentators are debating the extent of Islamabad interference in a process that ousted Khan, who had been repeatedly criticized for corruption and poor governance. The end result, however, is a fractious and divided government in AJK that will likely be more susceptible to defeat by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the next election. Whether it will be more cooperative in efforts to shut down Lakshar-e-Taiba/Jamaat-ud-Dawa activities in AJK remains to be seen. End Summary.

Sardar Attique's Ouster

¶12. (SBU) On January 6, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly approved a vote of no-confidence against Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan after accusing him of mismanagement, corruption, and harming the Muslim Conference (MC) party through his support for former President Musharraf's four-point formula for Kashmir. This formula abandoned Pakistan's longstanding demand for a plebiscite on Kashmir and supported greater autonomy, but not independence for Kashmir. The opposition also alleged that Musharraf propped up Sardar Attique as his proxy in AJK. Sardar Yaqoob Khan was sworn in as the eighth prime minister of AJK after the no-confidence motion was supported by 31 of the 46 members present in the Assembly.

¶13. (SBU) Journalists told POL FSN that many AJK ministers and legislators were angry with Sardar Attique's style of governance and these ministers and legislators used the no-confidence vote as retribution.

Governance Structure

¶14. (SBU) The portion of Kashmir that has been under

Pakistan's control since partition in 1947, AJK, is constitutionally a self governing, independent state, not technically part of Pakistan. The AJK government provides Pakistan-administered Kashmir a veneer of democracy and governance infrastructure, but in reality, all major decisions on Kashmir are made in Islamabad by the Islamabad-based Kashmir Council. The Pakistani Prime Minister sits as the chairman of the Council; the AJK President is the vice-chairman. The Council consists of nine members, five of whom are appointed by the Pakistani Prime Minister, and four who are selected by the AJK legislative assembly.

¶15. (SBU) The AJK legislative assembly addresses local economic, infrastructure, and social issues and is comprised of forty-nine seats. Forty-one legislators are directly elected, and out of these forty-one, there is a quota of twelve seats for Kashmiri refugees living in Pakistan. After the legislative assembly is elected, eight more seats will be indirectly elected. The eight seats are broken down into five seats for women, one for an Islamic scholar, one for a technocrat, and one to represent Kashmiris residing overseas.

The body and leadership of the Assembly are required to take an oath to support Kashmir's accession to Pakistan.

AJK Politics

¶16. (SBU) Elections in AJK were first held in 1975, after then Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto established a branch of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in AJK. When

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General Zia ul-Haq imposed martial law in Pakistan in 1977, the AJK Legislative Assembly was dissolved and General Hayat Khan was appointed as the Chief Executive. Hayat served until elections were held in 1985, when Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan was elected the President and Sardar Sikandar Hayat was chosen as the Prime Minister.

¶17. (SBU) Two major political parties operating in AJK are the Pakistan People's Party-AJK (PPP- AJK) and the Muslim Conference (MC), which is ideologically linked to the Pakistan Muslim League. Both parties have taken turns holding the majority of seats in the legislative assembly as well as the positions of prime minister and president. MC led the government from 1985-90, and the PPP- AJK took over in 1990. MC again took the lead in the 1991 elections and ruled until 1996. PPP- AJK returned to power in 1996 until the MC regained the majority in 2001. Both Sardar Attique and Sardar Yaqoob belong to the MC.

¶18. (C) Comment: Even as elements of the Muslim Conference, instrumental in orchestrating the no-confidence vote against Attique, claim that the federal government played no part in his ouster, commentators in Muzaffarabad believe the entire move was orchestrated by Islamabad. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz ceased supporting Attique because he supported Musharraf. The PPP in Islamabad did not trust him since he was ideologically aligned with Nawaz. Nawaz's support for Sardar Yaqoob's faction of the MC has left the Conference divided. The end result is a fractious and divided AJK government, one that will likely be more susceptible to defeat by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the next election. End Comment.

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